IN WAR WITH THE JAPANESE

BY WALTER GIFFORD SMITH.

AFTER the capture of Port Arthur in November, 1894, Marshal Oyama's army, 30,000 strong, settled down in garrison at that place and in Kinchow and Talienwan (now Dalny) to await orders for a second campaign. These orders came in about seven weeks, directing the Marshal to cooperate with Admiral Ito in the reduction of Wei-hai-Wei, the fortified harbor across the Gulf of Pechili, on the Shantung shore, where Admiral Ting's powerful fleet had taken refuge after the battle of the Yalu. Oddly enough, the first thing the Japanese commanders did was to warn the enemy of their intent in a joint letter which is one of the curiosities of martial literature. The writers—Marshal, the Count Oyama and Admiral Ito—began by stating the causes of the successive failures of Chinese arms by land and sea, ascribing them in the main to the authority of the literary class in all the affairs of the empire. "We do not venture to deny," so the letter ran, "that this system is excellent in itself and might well be permanent and sufficient if the Chinese were to stand alone in the world. But natural isolation is no longer a possibility. What a hard experience the Japanese empire had thirty years ago and how narrowly she escaped the awful calamity which threatened, Your Excellency well knows. To throw away the old principle and adopt the new as the sole condition of preserving the integrity of the empire is as necessary with your government now as it was with ours then."

With this good start, Oyama and Ito went on to say that Ting himself was the man to reform China, but that he could only do it by putting an end to the war and giving himself over unreservedly to Japanese tutelage. "Compared with the re-establishment on a sound working basis of the oldest empire in the world, with its glorious history and its extensive territory, what is the surrender of a fleet or the loss of a whole army? If Your Excellency be truly patriotic and loyal to the cause of your country we would beg you to listen to the words of a sympathetic heart filled with the sense of honor representative of the fighting men of Japan which asks you to come and stay in Japan until the time shall arrive when your services shall be required for the good cause.

"Not to speak of the numerous instances of final success after temporary humiliation in your own history of the ancient dynasties, let us call your attention to the case of the French Marshal, McMahon, who allowed himself to be detained in the enemy's land till it was expedient that he should return and aid in reforming the Government, which, instead of destroying him, raised him to the Presidency, or to the case of Osman Pasha, whom the unfortunate event of Plevna did not prevent from subsequently filling the post of Minister of War and rendering important services in reforming the army."

The letter closed with the assurance that Admiral Ting would be received honorably in Japan, "the Emperor having even forgiven rebels against his own authority and, as in the cases of Admiral Enomoto and Privy Councillor Otori, raised them to high rank."

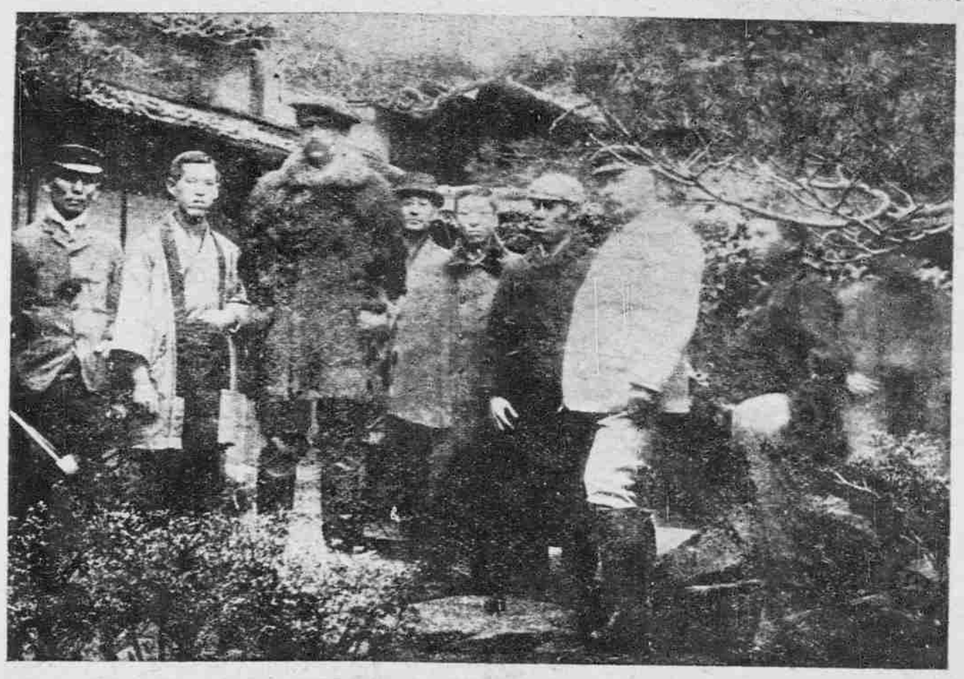
But all this sophistry was wasted on the Chinese commander, who at once began to strengthen his position and prepare for the coming struggle. He made no reply to the letter, although, weeks afterward, in making his capitulation, he referred to it briefly.

Ting might well have thought himself secure from capture if he had any faith in the fighting stamina of the land garrison about Wei-hai-Wei harbor. His own officers and men he thought he could trust. They had borne themselves pluckily at the Yalu, where they had so crippled Admiral Ito's ships that all but five of their own were able to make port. As for the soldiers, they were behind entrenchments and the foreign officers with them believed they could stand fire. Certainly no means of defence which engineering skill could devise were lacking. The island of Liu-Kon-Tau, which cut off the harbor from the sea save for two narrow channels on either side, towered precipitously hundreds of feet, with Krupp and Armstrong guns of the largest size defending it. Other forts stood further back on lower ground, dominating the bay. In the eastern channel was a small island fort, also well armed. On the eastern and western mainland, near the sea, were seven granite and earth fortresses, built by German engineers and mounting fifty siege guns. Back of these, facing interior approaches, were redoubts, mines and rifle pits. Booms made of logs cabled together had been laid across the harbor openings and back of them were electrical mines and nests of torpedoes. The Chinese vessels of war lay behind Liu-Kon-Tau. They consisted of twenty-six fighting craft—two battleships, several cruisers and gunboats, thirteen torpedo boats and a training ship. With 4000 men in the fleet and 10,000 in the shore defenses, and with a fair supply of provisions, all that was needed to keep the Japanese in check for months was courage to resist them.

Marshal Oyama's expeditionary force, 20,000 strong, embarked in transports at Talien-wan on Thursday, January 24, 1895, and started by night across the Gulf of Pechili to the Shantung promontory, about fifty-five miles east of Wei-hai-Wei. The first ships to arrive in the cove called Yung Ching bay, where the landing was made, found 2000 Chinese infantry and four field pieces posted there. The enemy, easily dispersed by a few shots, retreated to the town of Yung Ching, seven miles away where they joined the garrison and thenceforth resisted the Japanese advance.

Count Oyama's army was formed in two divisions. The main body, under the Marshal himself, consisted of two brigades commanded by Lieutenant-General Sakuma and Major-General Yamagouchi, and a rear guard, accompanied by the main headquarters, under Prince Fushimi, a cousin of the Emperor. The second division of two brigades was led by the unfortunate Major-General Odera, who was killed in the moment of victory a few days later. Marshal Oyama ordered Odera to march along the sea beach towards Wei-hai-Wei, while the other wing of the army kept a parallel interior course ten miles distant. The forward movement began on January 25th, being timed, as it afterward appeared, so as to reach the Chinese stronghold while the native New Year festivities were in progress. Oyama thought that the enemy would not stop feasting for the sake of fighting.

I was attached to headquarters as war correspondent of the San Francisco Chronicle and saw nearly all that was worth seeing. The departure of the Generals from Yung Ching bay interested me much. They held a conference early in the morning and then rode to their outposts or commands. Odera, short, stocky, bluff and white-haired, with no distinguishing mark of rank save the red band on his cap and the black braid on his sleeves, rode off as for a feast, waving his hand blithely to his commander. Sakuma, Japan's great tactician, straight as a lance, six feet and more in height, calm, austere and dignified, hardly a trace of the Oriental in manner or face, saluted formally and rode away at a gallop. Yamagouchi, stout and thick-set, with iron-gray sweeping mustache, looked the dependable commander that he was. His name has been recently familiar, he having commanded the Japanese troops at Peking. One could not help pity Prince Fushimi, a man indubitably weak in soldierly virtues, as he smiled vacantly over the edge of his high fur collar; but Fushimi, always under the eye of the Marshal, had no great responsibility. We all came to love the Marshal. He was a very fat man with a chin beard, pitted complexion and a wide, friendly smile. So tender was his heart that he could not sleep when his men or even his prisoners were suffering from wounds. A little way off he looked like a Dutch burgomaster who loved his schnapps and had no guile. Yet the Marshal was the cool, resolute, successful soldier after all.



CORRESPONDENTS AND SERVANTS.

As the commander rode towards Yung Ching that dull, snowy morning, I saw a tall Chinese, astride a donkey, in the midst of the staff. It turned out that this man, to all appearances a coolie like hundreds of others who had come with the expedition to Talien-wan to act as porters, was a pretender to the dragon throne, a lineal descendant of the Ming Emperor whom the Manchus had supplanted 300 years ago. He wanted the war to end in the capture of Peking and the expulsion of the ruling dynasty and he proposed to be on hand to claim his ancestral rights. No one seemed to know what finally became of him. Chinese camp followers were not much in evidence when the enemy's guns began to challenge all comers.

On the night trip from Talien-wan I had met T. Cowen, war correspondent of the London "Times," and we had agreed to share each other's mess and company. The second night out he and I slept in a Buddhist temple, tethering our horses in the snowy courtyard. About 3 o'clock in the morning shrill cries mingling with the gale awoke us, and we saw, reddening the oil paper windows of the gloomy old place, the glare of fire. When we got into the street, which was filled with half-crazed street, which was filled with half-crazed Chinese and sleepy Japanese troopers, it was easy to see that the town was doomed. A spark from a camp fire had lodged in the thatch of a cottage roof and started flames that soon spread widely. With wells and streams frozen, nothing could be done to save the houses; and as the villagers realized this some of them went mad. There was cause enough. Not only were their homes and little stores of rice and millet burning, but they were thenceforth outlaws in their own land, for in that part of Shantung province, when a family is "burned out" its nearest relatives and neighbors, believing that the gods have cursed it, shut their doors against every appeal for shelter and aid. These poor people could get help nowhere. They must live thereafter, if they live at all, as banditti. It was a pitiable sight to see families in single file, the aged leading and the tiny-footed women and their young toddling after, carrying what few things they had saved from the fire, moving off toward the frozen hills, making inarticulate cries like tortured animals. But it was war. Is it strange that the Boxer movement began in that part of Shantung?

As Mr. Cowen and I turned the corner of the temple towards a blazing ruin that half an hour before had been the snug home of a merchant, a young Chinese woman, staring, shrieking and disheveled, attacked us furiously. She carried a month-old baby. This she held by one foot, and as she ran towards us she swung the infant about her head like a club. I grasped the child before it could fall, and an old Chinaman, who might have been the grandsire of the woman, seized and threw her to the ground, where she lay singing a weird native song that sounded like a wail, a prayer and a malediction. Then the old man beckoned us to the wing of a house that was burning and made motions about his throat as he led the way. We followed, thinking he meant to hang himself. The wing itself was not yet on fire, but beyond, through an open door, we could see a room glowing like a furnace in a black density of smoke. Turning a yellow, wrinkled face towards us, the old man shrieked something in the jargon of his race and then, before we could hold him back, he plunged, with head bent far down, into the inferno beyond. We caught a glimpse of him, the mere ghastly shadow of a curled up form about which blue fires were dancing. Perhaps he suffered less in that instant sacrifice than he would have done crouched behind some rock in an almost Arctic waste, dying by inches of cold and hunger.

LANDING ON SHANTUNG FROM TRANSPORTS.

At daylight, after eating a little rice and some crackers, all we had, Mr. Cowen and I joined General Sakuma and staff for what was said to be a reconnoissance. The General led the way on a fast horse, the staff, an escort of sixteen cavalrymen and ourselves following. There are few roads in China, as the people cannot spare the land from cultivation, and we galloped over plowed ground and terraces, made our way up and down the sides of ravines and through ice-bound watercourses, finally reaching a hill overlooking a small valley. On the summit stood Major-General Yamagouchi and his chief of staff; behind was a regiment, shivering in gray blanket overcoats as the keen north wind swept through the ranks. Just in front a skirmish line was deploying towards a small stone village which lay at the base of a hill, the flanks of which were traversed by a stone wall. We could see no enemy, but his presence was revealed in puffs of smoke from the village and the zip of bullets. The Japanese skirmishers went steadily on, firing at will, when the crest of the stone wall flashed and burgeoned with the volleys of a hidden regiment. Here and there a Japanese soldier fell, but the rest charged the village and drove out its motley defenders; then, turning towards the wall, which they could enfilade, they completed the Chinese rout. Through field glasses the flying Chinese could be seen throwing off their tunics of bright blue cloth with broad red bordering, show uniform. The line of Chinese retreat was always to be followed by the cast-off uniforms if by nothing else. Bereft of that brilliant toggery the celestial soldier looked like any other coolie and could claim, if captured, that he was a peaceful farmer of the vicinage.

That day a Chinese lieutenant was brought in. He had thrown away his tunic, but he had two rifles with rough bale-rope slings. One of them was a Mauser carbine; the other a Remington arm to which he had fitted a sheet iron bayonet shaped like a trowel and bound to the barrel with wire and twine. The bayonet was crumpled as if it had been thrust by a soldier at full tilt against a stone wall. I noticed that the woodwork supporting the barrel was charred. It had been the habit of the officer, one of his captors said, to spit yams with the bayonet and roast them over the fire. If the rifle was hurt by it so much the worse for the rifle.

The next day I had an odd adventure. General Sakuma said the army would not go on for twenty-four hours. He was about to leave with a scouting party and would prefer to have the correspondents remain behind. Shortly after noon word came that the General would spend the night at a village eight miles away and that we could come up if we chose. Cowen and I started without a guide, leaving servants to follow with the baggage on pack mules. The way was icy and our horses were smooth shod, so little progress was made. Five miles, ten miles, and then twelve miles were traversed, but there was no sign of the General or the advance guard. Finally we reached a Chinese village, where our presence caused such fright that we rightly guessed that no troops had passed that way. A mountain range was near by, a lift of perhaps a thousand feet. We rode up to get a look, following footpaths to the summit. There was nothing beyond but a white, rolling, treeless country, a checkerboard of ditched and terraced farms, a few stone villages and here and there in the distance hurrying groups of natives—over all the solemn stillness of a winter sunset. We were far astray.

Going back was slow and cold work. Neither we nor our horses had anything to eat. Near 10 o'clock our servants hailed us. They knew we had gone wrong and were huddled under a hill waiting for something to turn up. Tired and chilled as we all were, a further search that night for headquarters was out of the question and we could not camp in the snow. Nothing was left but the resource of billeting the party on the nearest village whether the people were hospitable or otherwise.

A mile away was a line of stone cottages with a Buddhist temple at one end, and that way we turned. Entering the place by its one narrow and crooked street—in that part of China every house projects a little beyond the next one, presenting angles to scare devils away and giving every street a rough curve ending at a point—we clattered along amid the howling of dogs and the slamming of doors. As we neared the temple, where we wanted to stay, three priests ran out. Entering, we found small buildings on each side of the gate, a spacious high-walled courtyard beyond, and at the further end of the enclosure a long, gabled building, tiled, surmounted by iron dragons, hung with wind bells and having the characteristic Buddhist portal. Within was a single room, dominated by a great central altar with a trinity of gigantic wooden gods, slant-eyed and blue-faced before whom joss sticks were still burning and New Year dishes of aromatic food were set. From the black, ancient rafters hung rusty iron lanterns and on the walls were silk and paper banners. The solid furniture of the temple, very like mahogany, was highly polished—square, wide tables, arm chairs and low benches. At one end of the room was the usual brick bed with charcoal embers smouldering in its furnace opening. On a shelf was a tall porcelain jar, cylindrical in shape, lettered with blue hieroglyphics and almost transparent. For some days thereafter, until one of our coolies got tired of carrying it and threw the burden into a ravine, this beautiful work of art was used to soak beans and millet in for a kind of stew we made when the food could be found.

We levied that night on a near-by haystack for horse fodder and our own bedding, but we could find no wood for a fire. But a fire we must have. Our hands and feet were numb; our bodies chilled to the bone. Besides, a basket of frozen yams and a piece of goat's flesh had been found and there was a chance for a warm meal. No help for it—the temple fittings had to go. Chair after chair and table after table was burned, and just as I was about to turn in I saw our Japanese coolies, Buddhists though they were, pile the wooden gods upon the flames. Nothing suited a Buddhist from Japan better than a chance to burn the idols and wreck the temples of his co-religionists in China.

When the sun rose next morning the paper windows of our lodging place shook with the vibrations of a distant cannonade. Mounting as soon as possible, we left the temple, about which the inhabitants had gathered with sullen looks, and struck across the open country in the direction of the firing. In an hour we were wedged into lines of hurrying troops in the midst of narrow ravines. Grim little infantrymen were there, their tanned, alert faces full of terrier eagerness for a fight; cavalrymen riding clumsily on their stocky, short-necked beasts; artillerymen driving mules that bore on their backs the separated parts of mountain batteries and boxes of ammunition; military gendarmes, the military police of the army; coolies carrying bags of rice or firkins of pickled fruit slung on poles and dripping a red liquor like blood on the snowy trails—a tense, hurrying, heterogeneous and silent throng. Everywhere and everywhere the Japanese soldier is silent. Even when the Emperor rides by at home he makes no sound; in battle he charges and conquers without a cheer; on the march he is as quiet as the bearer at a funeral.

We were soon in the thick of the battle. Before us, a mile away, the Chinese field artillery was posted on a range of low hills; below it, hugging a line of stone villages and fences, were the infantry, their positions marked by tatters of white smoke and by immense triangular red banners, barred in white. They had been holding that ground since daylight against Yamagouchi's brigade. As we pressed forward for a good view we passed the returning stretcher bearers of the Red Cross. Many a poor fellow lay there down on the canvas pallet—dead. Every wounded man who came by, though some of them had the shadow of death on their faces, was smiling proudly and looking, it seemed, for the envious glances of his comrades. These men had shed their blood for the fatherland; the Emperor would hear of them and send them medals of honor; they would be village heroes whether they lived or died. Who would wear a white skin when he might win distinction like that?

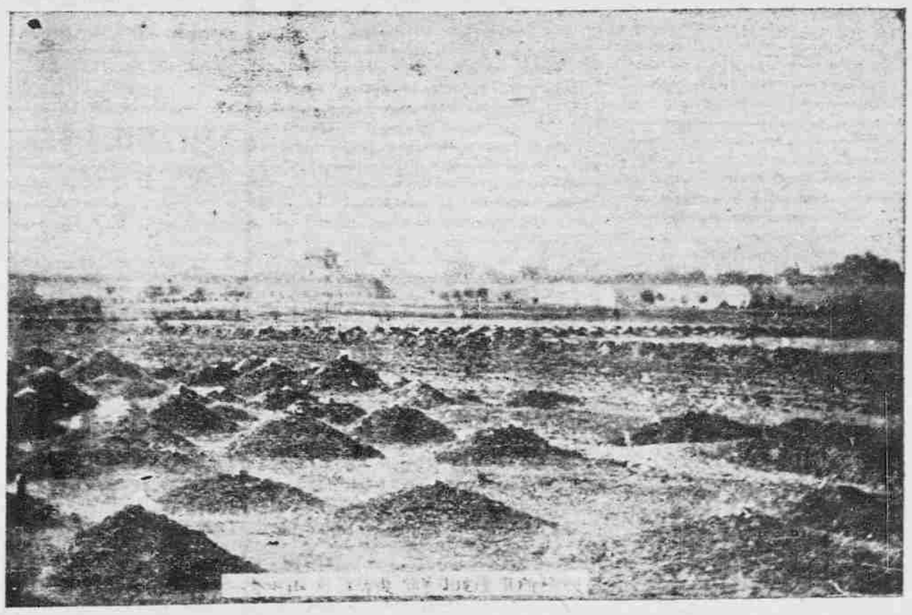
"There's Yamagouchi," said my companion. "He's on the hill with his staff. See his red cap? Better join him. Sakuma must be further back."

We rode to the foot of the hill, tethered the horses and mingled with the group, which was not all soldiers. Several Japanese press correspondents were already there. Just below, perhaps two hundred yards distant, a regiment of Japanese riflemen were firing at will and contributing every now and then a comrade to the mercies of the Red Cross corps. Standing where we were, the opportunity to be shot was obvious, and it was soon seen that the enemy did not intend to deprive us of it. The whole party, military and civil, stood on the sky line of a hill well in range. Such a target could not be overlooked.

"Did you see that stone fly out?" asked Cowen, pointing to a smooth cavity in the frozen ground at his feet where a cobble had been imbedded a moment before. I had not seen it, but the sound of a sharp smack had given the warning note of an intercepted missile. Now and then a singing bullet passed overhead. Then there was a hiss as of escaping steam, the fall of a heavy body a few feet away, a sharp metallic explosion, and we shrank under a shower of clods and scraps of iron. It was the first shell of my experience, though Cowen, a phlegmatic veteran of the Port Arthur campaign, had spent an hour with Yamaki, the "one-eyed demon" of the Japanese army, when that reincarnated warrior of the old barbaric days stood on an unsheltered hilltop with no bushes there whatever, his headquarters flag floating above him at the tip of a lance, and receiving the fire of the Chinese forts with perfectly flawless delight.

We saw the fighting on that bleak January day for two hours. The Chinese force was large and Oyama had, perhaps, 12,000 men in hand. Twice the enemy came out of his intrenchments and charged. Long lines formed in skirmish array with a flag bearer for every ten men. The standards would be hurried forward first to a point an hundred yards in front of the main body; then the troops at a double run would line up with them. It was something like the movements of a frog, leaping forward and then stopping to take breath. All the while there was a crackle of flame on the Japanese lines and a long roll of explosions from the artillery on both sides. I remember seeing a part of the stone fence below us fly into the air and come down with a shower of rifles, bayonets and fragments of uniformed men; there was a glint and crash in a near-by copse and a small tree fell and lashed the wounded with its brittle branches, its trunk clean cut by the whizzing steel; a chatter of bullets was heard among the headstones of a little graveyard where Japanese sharpshooters were entrenched. A mounted man galloping by vanished for a moment in the midst of a bursting power cloud and was seen again bleeding among the ice-bound furrows of a plowed field. Once I heard a thud and a sick cough. A bright young lieutenant of artillery was a corpse, with a bullet through his breast. One moment before he had been laughing. But the enemy was driven back both times when half way across the field. We could see the Chinese scampering for their lines, half their colors and their comrades left behind, while among them screamed the shrapnel and whistled the steel-tipped Murata bullets of the Japanese. Before the infantry battle ended the Chinese guns on the ridge had been silenced. One battery of four small Krupps had kept firing for an hour and Yamagouchi had not been able to dislodge it. Finally a crack Japanese mountain battery made its way over the rocks and ice from the extreme rear, took station on the mountain side to the right of the Japanese line and discharged its five pieces all at once. The range-finding was perfect; for in a few seconds the air just above the hostile battery flashed with darting points of light as the shells burst together. When the smoke blew away the Chinese guns were seen, but not one was there to work them.

(Concluded Next Sunday)



KINCHOW, NEAR PORT ARTHUR—HILLOCK GRAVES OF CHINESE KILLED IN BATTLE.

No news has yet been received from Marshal Hendry from Japan concerning the arrest of Adachi.